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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2534
INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 3937
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0906
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 1148
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1352
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6019
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0843
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 2703
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 1534
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0349

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000937

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NEA/MAG FOR ROBERT EWING
NEA/FO FOR DAS GRAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2017
TAGS: PREL PBTS AG MO WI SP
SUBJECT: VAN WALSUM IN MADRID MAY 18

REF: STATE 64947

Classified By: CDA Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to MFA Deputy Director General for North Africa Manuel Gomez-Acebo on May 17. Gomez-Acebo told Poloff that UN Personal Envoy Peter van Walsum had postponed his planned May 16-22 tour of the Maghreb on May 15 and would instead be in Madrid May 18 for a meeting with Foreign Minister Moratinos. Gomez-Acebo did not know what had prompted van Walsum to cancel his consultation trip.

¶2. (C) On the substance of the demarche, Gomez-Acebo agreed that the resolution was a success and that the Group of Friends needs to maintain the momentum. He said that Spain could support the idea of bringing the sides together to discuss format and formalities simply to get the process moving rather than attempting to address substance at a first meeting. During DAS Gray's April visit to Madrid, Director General Alvaro Iranzo had similarly proposed initial meetings to address issues of lesser importance before tackling the main dispute. On the idea of selecting a location, Gomez-Acebo offered that this could be done through informal consultations with the Group of Friends, and he added that Spain would support getting van Walsum to address these formalities quickly even if he wants to move more slowly on beginning substantive negotiations. Gomez-Acebo noted that Spain shares van Walsum's concern that it would be risky to try for too much too fast.

¶3. (C) Noting previous statements by Gomez-Acebo and Iranzo that perhaps the Polisario did not see van Walsum as a credible facilitator, Poloff asked whether Spain feels that van Walsum can do the job. Gomez-Acebo replied that Spain is definitely not advocating replacing van Walsum, but given the importance of this opportunity, it is necessary to take advantage of the moment and make sure that neither party has an excuse to refuse negotiations. Gomez-Acebo said that van Walsum has proven to be less pro-Morocco than initially perceived. He regretted that van Walsum had postponed his trip to the region as it would have been a good chance to check the temperature of the Polisario.

LLORENS